



State of Washington
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

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NOTICE

CHANGES TO CRAB SEASON STRUCTURE

November 22, 2006

Dear Coastal Dungeness Crab Fisher:

Recently, you received a letter from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) that described the structure for the opening of the coastal Dungeness crab fishery for the 2006-2007 season. Since then, a number of industry members raised substantive and credible issues to the Department with regard to the management line being placed at Point Chehalis. In addition, the Department was able to complete a second crab condition test near the mouth of the Columbia River that indicates the crab in that area meet the Tri-State meat pick-out protocols for a December 1 opener, see table below. In response to these new circumstances, the Department worked with crab industry leaders from the primary Washington ports and has made several changes to the season structure that was outlined in our November 17, 2006, letter. Please carefully review these changes in the management boundaries and the fair start provisions detailed below. We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused you, but we think the changes will work better for the fleet as a whole given this set of circumstances.

The Department is also continuing to work with the Quinault Indian Nation in an effort to complete the plans for the area north of Point Chehalis. As stated in our previous letter, we will send you specific information in a subsequent mailing regarding area closures and other management measures associated with our state-tribal agreements and our legal obligations to meet our harvest sharing obligations with the coastal treaty Indian tribes.

Test Fishing Results

By agreement, each of the three West Coast states' fish and wildlife agencies conduct pre-season test fishing and follow protocols for opening the coastal commercial Dungeness crab season based on criteria established by the Coastal Dungeness Crab Tri-State Dungeness Crab Committee. The criteria for opening the season on December 1 are a meat recovery rate (or projected rate) of 23% north of Cascade Head and 25% south of Cascade Head.

The results are summarized below.

	<u>1A</u>	<u>1B</u>	<u>II</u>	<u>III</u>	<u>Meat Recovery</u>
Westport	16.3%	31.1%	52.6%	0.0%	21.0% (10-30-07)
Long Beach	5.4%	25.6%	69.0%	0.0%	22.0% (10-26-07)
	29.5%	41.1%	29.4%	0.0%	23.0% (11-20-07)

Revised Season Structure

Klipsan Beach to the Washington-Oregon Border including Willapa Bay:

The coastal Dungeness crab commercial fishery will open to state fishers from **Klipsan Beach (46°28.00)** to the WA/OR border (46°15.00), **including Willapa Bay**, on December 1, 2006.

- a. Fishers participating in the fishery south of **Klipsan Beach or in Willapa Bay** will be subject to temporary reduced pot limits. Fishers with permanent pot limits of 500 and 300 will be allowed to use **400** or **250** pots, respectively. Unused buoy tags must be on board vessels engaged in fishing in this area. The temporary pot limit reduction will be removed when the ocean area north of **Klipsan Beach** opens.
- b. Vessels that fish in the area between Point Arena, California and **Klipsan Beach and/or in Willapa Bay**, Washington before the ocean area north of **Klipsan Beach** opens will be subject to the fair start restrictions identified below.

Klipsan Beach to Destruction Island:

The state commercial fishery will open from **Klipsan Beach, Washington (46°28.00)** to **Destruction Island (47°40.50)** after a 40-day head start has been provided to the tribal fishery. We currently estimate the opening date will be between January 1 and January 15, 2007.

- a. You can expect certain areas, known as Special Management Areas (SMA), to be closed to the state fishery between the mouth of the Copalis River and Destruction Island. These area closures will be specified in a subsequent mailing to each license holder.

Destruction Island to Sand Point:

The state commercial fishery will open from Destruction Island to Sand Point (48°07.00) on January 16, 2007.

- a. This area will have an SMA that is closed to state fishers. The SMA is the same as the one that was in place last year and will be specifically defined in a subsequent mailing.

Sand Point to U.S.-Canada Border:

The state commercial fishery will open from Sand Point to the U.S.-Canadian border on the same day that the area from **Klipsan Beach** to Destruction Island opens. We currently estimate the opening date will be between January 1 and January 15, 2007.

- a. This area will have an SMA that is closed to state fishers. The SMA is the same as the one that was in place last year and will be specifically described in a subsequent mailing.

Fair Start Provisions:

- **Klipsan Beach (46°28.00) to Oysterville (46°33.00).** Vessels that fish between Point Arena, California and Klipsan Beach, Washington, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of Klipsan Beach opens may not fish in the area between Klipsan Beach and Oysterville until 10 days have elapsed from the time that the area north of Klipsan Beach opens.
- **Oysterville (46°33.00 N.) to U.S. Canada Border.** Vessels that participate in the fishery between Point Arena, California and Klipsan Beach, Washington, including Willapa Bay, before the area north of Klipsan Beach opens may not fish in the area between Oysterville and the U.S./Canada border until 30 days has elapsed from the time that the area north of Klipsan Beach opens.

Common Requirements:

- a. The season opening date in all areas, except Destruction Island to Sand Point, will be preceded by a 64-hour gear soak period.
- b. Vessel hold inspections will be conducted the day prior to the openings, except for the area between Destruction Island and Sand Point.
- c. During vessel hold inspections, vessel operators will be required to declare if their intent is to fish south of Klipsan Beach and/or in Willapa Bay before the area to the north of Klipsan Beach opens.

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- d. Vessels fishing south of Klipsan Beach before the area north of Klipsan Beach opens may deliver their catch into ports within Grays Harbor or Willapa Bay. Vessels that want to deliver their catch into ports north of Grays Harbor, e.g., Bellingham and/or Anacortes, before February 15, 2007, must notify the Department's Enforcement Office (360.249.6522 x253) 24-hours prior to transiting waters north of 47°00.00 N. for possible inspection.
- e. All license holders will be required to carry, complete, and submit logbooks to the Department. At the time of the hold inspection, vessel operators will be provided a logbook and instructions. This information will greatly assist us in managing our fishery in the future.

The Department will mail you the information concerning tribal SMAs and other pertinent issues associated with harvest sharing with the treaty Indian tribes as soon as our discussions with the Quinault Indian Nation are concluded. The SMAs north of Destruction Island will be the same as last year. We will get a complete description out to you as soon as possible.

Thanks to all of you for your patience and understanding during this difficult process. Have a safe and prosperous season.

Sincerely,



Philip Anderson, Assistant Director
Intergovernmental Resource Management

PA:dak

cc: Jeff Koenings, Larry Peck, Lew Atkins, Ron Warren, Heather Reed, Tom Davis